

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 5557
March 7, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, distinguished members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 5557. My name is Michele Eathorne. I am one of the co-Director's at YWCA New Britain Child Care Center. We are a large community-based, school-readiness, NAEYC accredited child care centers serving children from 6 weeks to 12 years of age. We have 188 school-readiness children enrolled in our program.

I am testifying in support of House Bill 5557. Early childhood teachers in state-funded programs are grossly underpaid while at the same time facing increasing education requirements. Early childhood teacher wages in state-funded programs are low because state reimbursement rates are so low.

We are having a very difficult time finding qualified staff to fill our open positions in our childcare department. Most of our applicants have a minimal education. Some of our current employees are currently taking course work towards a CDA or Associate degree in Early Childhood Education. We have and continue to lose teachers who have succeeded in acquiring their Bachelor or Master degrees. Talking to community colleges partners, they are telling us that there has been a decrease in enrollment of students entering the Early Childhood field. We have had our own staff, who are working toward their Associate degree in Early Childhood state that classes that they have enrolled in have been cancelled due to lack of student enrollment.

Quality early childhood education and intervention is vital; it is the opportunity to shape a child's brain during the most rapid period of development in their growth. Smart investments in made in the early years can lead to profoundly better outcomes for our children, families, community and economy especially so for our disadvantaged children. We need to invest in our teachers. Quality teachers come with a quality education and to ensure that, our teachers deserve equitable pay with the increasing educational requirements asked of them.

I urge you to take action to raise wages for early childhood education; the work we do is very important.